

# Psychological Safety in Mental Health Organisations

## Actions for workers



### What is psychological safety?

Psychological safety is the shared understanding that it's okay to speak up and take interpersonal risks, such as questioning decisions, suggesting new ideas, or expressing concerns, without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.

It is the absence of harm or threat to a person's mental health and wellbeing.

### Why is psychological safety important?

Feeling unsafe to question decisions or speak up can result in mistakes that could have been prevented, lost opportunities, and a barrier to implement innovative ideas.

Psychological safety is essential to ensuring a workplace culture that is healthy, productive

and innovative, and where staff feel valued, empowered and supported, ultimately leading to better service delivery outcomes and overall organisational success.

### How should psychological safety be considered in mental health settings?

In mental health organisations, psychological safety is crucial for **effective service delivery** underpinned by **recovery-oriented, trauma informed principles and practice approaches**, which fosters a collaborative and supportive environment where both staff and people accessing services can thrive.

“ If you don't feel safe and empowered at work, how can people accessing your services feel safe and empowered? ”

## Promoting a supportive culture

### Actions for employees

- 1 Focus on strength-based, solution-oriented questions and collaborative approaches to problem-solving and decision-making
- 2 Respectfully listen and ask questions about colleagues' ideas.
- 3 Foster reflective practice through open discussion and seek feedback.
- 4 Extend kindness and respect in all interactions and provide thoughtful and curious responses.
- 5 Check in with your colleagues, particularly when working remotely.
- 6 Be willing to share your own struggles and uncertainties, which can help others feel safe to do the same.
- 7 Seek regular support and check-ins from your manager and ensure you have the guidance and resources needed
- 8 Understand your role and responsibilities and establish boundaries to reduce feelings of ambiguity and anxiety within yourself and across the team.

### Considerations for workers with lived experience

The actions listed are even more pertinent for workers with lived experience.

Additional considerations may be:

- Discussions with your team leader or manager on your preferences and needs if you become unwell in the workplace
- Reasonable adjustments to reduce mental health impacts on your work capacity

It is also important to be aware of both spoken and **unspoken** lived experience within the work environment.

## Additional resources

**MindSpot** [mindspot.org.au](http://mindspot.org.au)

### Mental Health at Work - Legal Obligations and Rights

[nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/legal-obligations-and-rights](http://nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/legal-obligations-and-rights)

### Safe Work NSW | Safety complaints

[safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/consultation-at-work/safety-complaints2](http://safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/consultation-at-work/safety-complaints2)

### Rural or remote mental health

[healthdirect.gov.au/rural-remote-mental-health](http://healthdirect.gov.au/rural-remote-mental-health)

## Support services

**Lifeline** 13 11 14

**Beyond Blue** 1300 22 4636

**MensLine Australia** 1300 78 99 78

**QLife** 1800 184 527

**Suicide Call Back Service** 1300 659 467

**NSW Mental Health Line** 1800 011 511

Your workplace may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for free and confidential counselling



See our guide on actions for leaders and organisations